

## Section I - Introduction

### **Program History and Authority**

The Caretaker Supplement (CTS) is a cash benefit program. The program's benefit recipients are low-income parents who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments. These SSI parents receive CTS benefits for each of their eligible children.

Wisconsin's Caretaker Supplement was authorized by 1997 Act 27, which created ss. 49.775. This original statutory language enabled and funded the program and specified the program's basic eligibility requirements. It also included language that specified that the intent of the program was to provide cash benefits to SSI parents who would have met the eligibility requirements for benefits that were in place on July 16, 1996 under Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC), a program eliminated by the federal government in 1997.

The first Caretaker Supplement benefits were distributed to approximately 5,700 former AFDC recipients for their 11,000 children in December 1997. The initial benefit payment was \$77 per child. Beginning January 1998, the program began paying SSI recipients who had not been receiving AFDC, but whose children met the eligibility requirements for AFDC and would have received AFDC cash and Medicaid benefits had AFDC not been eliminated by the federal government. These CTS-eligible children were identified by their receipt of AFDC-Medicaid in Wisconsin's Client Assistance for Re-Employment and Economic Support (CARES) computer system. AFDC-Medicaid eligibility requirements were identical to AFDC cash requirements, and this methodology for identifying new CTS cases served as a satisfactory proxy until a CTS-specific electronic eligibility determination process could be implemented in CARES.

The benefit payment amount for CTS remained \$77 per month, per child until July 1998, when the payment was increased by the Legislature to \$100 per month, per child. 1999 Wisconsin Act 9 increased

the benefit to \$250 per month for the first eligible child and \$150 per month for each subsequent eligible child. This change was effective in November 1999. CTS benefits are never prorated based on the number of days a SSI parent is eligible for any payment month.

During April 2001, the Wisconsin Legislature promulgated Ch. HFS 79, an administrative rule that enabled the Department of Health and Family Services to recover CTS benefit payments that were incorrectly made, due to ineligibility or overpayment, to SSI recipients.

Appendix 1, State Statutes and Codes contains current statutory language governing the Caretaker Supplement benefit.

On January 25, 2002, CTS became a unique program of assistance in Wisconsin's CARES system. Local economic support agency workers began using this computerized system to process applications, determine eligibility and generate notices and payments for CTS effective with payments for March 2002.

As of January 2004, approximately 6,000 SSI parents were receiving Caretaker Supplement benefits for their 12,300 children.

### **Benefit Funding**

In 2003, CTS benefits totaled approximately \$29.5 million. Caretaker Supplement benefits are funded by a combination of Wisconsin general purpose revenue tax dollars (GPR) and federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) dollars. The portion of CTS funding that is derived from GPR dollars is utilized by the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) to meet Wisconsin's federally imposed maintenance of effort requirement for Supplemental Security Income. For SSI purposes, CTS benefits are viewed as part of Wisconsin's SSI state supplemental payment. After DHFS counts its GPR funded portion of CTS toward its SSI maintenance of effort requirement, the remainder of CTS benefit funding is supported by TANF dollars.

In turn, these TANF dollars are counted by Wisconsin's Department of Workforce Development (DWD) toward its federally imposed TANF maintenance of effort.

### **Program Administration and Partnerships**

The Caretaker Supplement is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services and local county and tribal economic support agencies. The local agencies are the point of application and eligibility determination for CTS. DHFS contracts with several data processing firms to manage the CARES related aspects of the program and to process SSI payments, to which CTS benefits are added. Illustration 1 depicts these administrative relationships.

The entity administering CTS in DHFS is the State SSI Coordinator, housed within the Administrator's Office of the Division of Disability and Elder Services, Room 850, 1 W. Wilson Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53702. Program administration may also be reached by phone at 608-266-6890 or by fax at 608-266-2579.

Persons who need to report a lost or stolen SSI check that includes Caretaker Supplement or who need a CTS benefit history must contact Recipient Services at 800-362-3002. Requests for CTS benefit histories may also be faxed to 608-221-0991. Misdirected SSI benefit checks must be mailed to DHFS/ State SSI, P.O. Box 6680, Madison, Wisconsin 53716-0680.

**For assistance with all matters related to application, eligibility, payment amount, appeals and grievances, etc., however, recipients or their representatives must contact their county or tribal economic support agency.**

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development receives this state's block grant for TANF funding and is therefore responsible for meeting the TANF reporting requirements specified by the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and completing the federal ACF-199, TANF Data Report. The DHFS assists in this activity

by providing monthly payment, eligibility and demographic information to DWD regarding CTS related TANF expenditures.